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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to determine the handicaps and problems facing Nigerian adult educators. The sample population was 90 adult educators drawn from both the public higher institutions and voluntary adult education agencies in Nigeria. The Educational Handicaps and Problem Questionnaire (EHPQ) developed from the study of Brunner and Nicholls (1960) was administered to adult educators in public higher institutions and voluntary agencies. Both groups of adult educators identified research, methodology, retention of competent professional staff, and definition of adult education as the major handicaps and problems in their field. The study concluded that both education policymakers and adult education agencies should work together in finding solutions to the problems of adult educators. Adult educators should be involved in enabling the university extension and colleges to capitalize on the vast network of relationships with voluntary agencies and faculties.
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THE STRUGGLE AND PROBLEMS FACING NIGERIAN ADULT
EDUCATORS: A CASE STUDY.

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Abstract

This study is concerned with the handicaps and problems facing Nigerian adult educators. The sample population was 90 adult educators drawn from both the public higher institutions and voluntary adult education agencies in Nigeria. The Educational Handicaps and Problem Questionnaire (EHPQ) developed from the study of Brunner and Nicholls (1960) was administered to adult educators in public higher institutions and voluntary agency institutions. Both the public and voluntary adult educators identified research; methodology; retention of competent professional staff and definition of adult education as the major handicaps and problems in their field.

Introduction

Apps (1979) defines problems as questions raised for inquiry, for solution, or for both inquiry and solution. Problems are in different categories, ranging from problems that are questions or questions that may be raised either for inquiry or for solution, to questions that may be raised for both inquiry and solution. Allee (1978) conceptualizes problem as a matter proposed for solution, a question difficult of solution, and a disputable and doubtful questions. Handicaps on the other hand are those impediments that hinder a person to perform successfully (Hornby and others, 1973).

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Problems have their dimensions, ranging from scientific and philosophical to the extent to which the problem is solvable or not. The scientific problems deal with an area where the dimensions of the questions can be carefully controlled and measured, while the philosophical dimensions of problem deal with uncontrollable and that which cannot be subjected to empirical test or measurement.

In this study, handicaps and problems are defined and seen together as those things that are disadvantageous and pose as impediments to the success of adult education as a field of study.

The purpose of this Study, therefore, is to investigate and determine those handicaps and problems against which adult educators struggle and need solution.

Synthesis of Literature

Studies in the area of handicaps and problems against which adult educators struggle are very scanty. There is little or no research done on this important aspect of adult education. In a study conducted to examine adult educators at work, Brunner and Nicholls (1960) identified the following as handicaps and problems of adult educators. The chief handicap and problem of all according to Brunner and Nicholls is administration. This is followed by apathy and recruiting problems. Other that were identified are teaching and marginality of the field itself. Among others were the newness of the field and personal problems.

Problems in adult education are as divergent today as they were at the inception of adult education as a field of study. Problems ranging from how adult learning could be facilitated to the understanding of the adult learners and types of clientele the adult education programmes are to serve are some of the areas that adult educators still struggle with (Apps, 1979). Clark, (1956) ascertained that the problems with which the adult educator must cope, involve both those inherent in the discipline and its field, and those which involved achieving status within powerful parent institutions that have many other and older interests other than adult education. Clark's statement may seem to be outdated but the truism of it, is that the heritage still lingers on today and much more relevant to the current problems and handicaps against which adult educators struggle.

People from other discipline continue to find it difficult to really understand what actually is this "adult education". In the words of Peter Jarvis, adult education, "because of its own efforts to establish an identity as a discipline, it has been very hard for people from other disciplines to break into the framework" (Spear, 1986). This, in addition, has complicated the problems and handicaps against which adult educators struggle.

Administrative conservatism is considered to be one of the handicaps and problems against which adult educators struggle. Adult educators suffer the administrative conservatism and stupidity because of the differences in responsibility, and inadequate financial support. The adult education administrator is looked

upon as a hypocrite operationally speaking when it comes to financing adult education. To him, adult education programmes is simply another avenue for money making device instead of being a responsible educator himself. This as noted by Clark, (1956) is nothing but "the enrollment economy" of adult education. As there are competitions for getting funds to support adult education programme, so also it is very difficult to succeed in getting the fund because of the administrative conservatism.

Adult educators cannot afford to deal with the problems as they (problems) are known to be the integral part of their work particularly, those who work for an agency or institution that sponsors adult education programmes. The basic facts are often undermined by the adult educators themselves. Apps, (1979) further attested to the fact that the basic problems often avoided by adult educators are those related to (a) the adult as a learner (b) the field of adult education and what it is (c) the purposes of adult education (d) the means and methods of adult education (e) the content of adult education and (f) research approaches. To them, (adult educators) these basic problems seemed insolvable.

The Purpose of the Present Study

One of the purposes of this Study is to investigate and determine those handicaps and problems of Nigerian adult educators. This researcher is of the view that Nigerian adult educators have their hands full of problems than what they can cope with. The identification of these problems would help in finding better approaches to solving them. One major area of concern on which

this Study is based is that the problems and handicaps facing Nigerian adult educators could best be known through a synthesis of the practitioners of adult education both in the public institutions and other primary agencies of adult education. In order to achieve this, adult educators in public institutions and voluntary agencies of adult education have been asked to react to, and express their views freely on statements describing the problems and handicaps in adult education.

Sample and Methodology

Sixty (60) public institutions' and forty (40) voluntary agencies' adult educators and practitioners were randomly selected from higher institutions and agencies sponsoring adult education in Oyo State of Nigeria. In addition, years of experience as a professional or practitioner was used as one of the criteria for sampling. Those adult educators and practitioners who had five or more years of experience were considered adequate by the researcher for the Study.

The "Education Handicaps and Problems Questionnaire" (EHPQ) was developed and adapted from the study of Brunner and Nicholls (1960) on "The Adult Educator, His Gratifications, Problems and Hopes." The instrument was further critiqued by a jury of experts in adult education both from public institutions and voluntary agencies. Those that were qualified or met the "years of experience" criterial were administered copies of questionnaire personally by the researcher to facilitate a fair percentage of returns.

A total of ninety (90) questionnaires were completed and returned, and considered usable for the Study. Public institution adult educators completed and returned fifty (50) out of sixty (60) questionnaires, while the voluntary agencies had all of their forty (40) questionnaire completed and returned. All the returned questionnaires were found usable for the Study. All added together showed a reasonable return of 90% for the Study analysis.

Analysis of Data

For the purpose of brevity, those statements that were classified as "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" were considered and accepted as positive responses from the respondents, and therefore computed under "Agree" since the two scales appeared to represent a positive responses. On the other hand, statements that were classified as "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree" were also considered and accepted as negative responses from the respondents and therefore computed under "Disagree".

TABLE I

The Number of Questionnaire Administered and
the Percentage of Returns

Respondents	Number of Questionnaire Administered	Total Number Returned	% of Returned Question- naire	Total Number of Usable Returns	% of Usable Returns
Public Institution Adult Educators	60	50	83.3	50	83.3
Voluntary Organization Adult Educators	40	40	100	40	100

Findings

Analysis in Table II showed that methodology, research, and retention of competent professional staff are the major handicaps and problems of Nigerian public institutions' adult educators. These, surprisingly were not rated the same way by the voluntary agencies' adult educators. The analysis showed that research, retention of competent professional staff, and lack of clear and unifying definition of adult education constitute the chief headache of adult educators in the voluntary agencies. These were rated 92.5%, 90%, and 80% respectfully. Though, lack of proper definition of adult education was identified as one of the handicaps, it was the least problem to the public institution adult educators.

TABLE II
The Struggle and Problems Facing
Nigerian Adult Educators

Problem Statements	Public Institution Adult Educators N = 50						Voluntary Organization Adult Educators N = 40					
	Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Status: lack of status and recognition for adult educators	35	(70)	5	(10)	10	(20)	18	(45)	12	(30)	10	(25)
Administration: administrative and stupidity; lack of financial support and acceptance	30	(60)	8	(16)	12	(24)	28	(70)	7	(17.5)	5	(12.5)
Relationship with other faculty staff: lack of rapport, respect the integrity of the individual as a mature person, and lack of understanding the real needs	26	(52)	6	(12)	18	(36)	21	(52.5)	4	(10)	15	(37.5)
Public Educational administrators' attitudes	37	(74)	3	(6)	10	(20)	30	(75)	6	(15)	4	(10)

TABLE II (CONT'D)

Problem Statements	Public Institution Adult Educators N = 50						Voluntary Organization Adult Educators N = 40					
	Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Retention of competent professional staff	42	(84)	7	(14)	1	(2)	36	(90)	-	-	4	(10)
Recruitment of Personnel	38	(76)	5	(10)	7	(14)	29	(72.5)	6	(15)	5	(12.5)
Definition: lack of clear and unifying definition of adult education	29	(58)	9	(18)	12	(24)	32	(80)	5	(12.5)	3	(7.5)
Methodology	46	(92)	-	-	4	(8)	30	(75)	7	(17.5)	3	(7.5)
Programming in adult education	36	(72)	11	(20)	3	(6)	23	(57.5)	9	(22.5)	8	(20)
Agency cooperation	40	(80)	4	(8)	6	(12)	27	(67.5)	7	(17.5)	6	(15)
Research	43	(86)	6	(12)	1	(2)	37	(92.5)	-	-	3	(7.5)

Both the public and voluntary institutions adult educators agreed that relationship with other faculty staff is a common problem in adult education. Among other handicaps indentified by both public institution adult educators and voluntary agencies adult educators are lack of status and proper recognition for adult educators, administration conservatism on financial support, recruitment of personnel, and programming.

Discussion

The investigation has revealed that Nigerian adult educators regardless of their places of service still struggle with a lot of handicaps and problems in their fields. As shown in the Study, the inability to gain the proper status with other disciplines has remained a problem in the field. With adult education being denied the full status among other educational disciplines has further reduced adult education to the rank of a marginal enterprize. This marginality of adult education has also given the various authorities the liberty to treat adult education as another avenue for money making. In the words of Mims (1986), "adult education no longer is afforded the status of less than urgent education. Today we are grappling with increased efforts to reduce the federal deficit by programme cutting". The recent proposal for rationalization of university programmes in the Nigerian universities is a matter of concern to all well thinking educators.

For adult education to take its rightful place among other disciplines, and in order to find a lasting solution to the old problems and handicaps against which adult educators struggle, this researcher is of the view that the public higher institutions should be made the centre of adult education with the universities being helped with more fund for public relation including research and recruitment of personnel for the promotion of adult education. Interests of adult educators should be aroused in research development in their fields to probe some of the issues in adult education.

Both education policy-makers and adult education agencies should work together in finding solution to these myriads of problems of adult educators. Adult educators should be involved in working out the modality of making the university extension and colleges to capitalize on the vast network of relationships with voluntary agencies and cognate faculties.

If adult education is ever to rid itself of its marginal status and other handicaps as expressed by the respondents, in this study, and achieve a climate of opinion favourable to its development, more attention should be directed to suppressing administrative conservatism. More efforts should also be directed to the changing of the current image of adult education from that of evening schools to a competitive image of regular academic discipline, and lifelong education.

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